



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Get Educated, Get Vaccinated and Get Tested for Hepatitis!

May is Hepatitis Awareness Month

MD Hepatitis Coalition Honors Local Heroes

Baltimore, MD (May 25, 2011) – Hepatitis can be a killer and an estimated 73,000 to 106,000 Marylanders have been infected with Hepatitis C during their lifetime. The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) joins the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Maryland Hepatitis Coalition in observance of Hepatitis Awareness Month and today, the Coalition honored Maryland heroes in the battle against this deadly disease.

"Regrettably, most people with hepatitis don't know they are infected, said Frances Phillips, Deputy Secretary for Public Health Services. "Treatment can prolong life, and getting tested is the first step."

Testing is critical to successfully treating Hepatitis. Awareness and prevention are the keys to stopping its spread. Vaccines do exist and DHMH urges Marylanders to talk with their health care providers about being vaccinated for Hepatitis A and B.

"Our community partners are critical in the success of addressing hepatitis," said Heather Hauck, Director of the DHMH Infectious Disease and Environmental Health Administration (IDEHA). "DHMH commends the Maryland Hepatitis Coalition in honoring community stakeholders who work to provide Hepatitis education and health care programs through The Hepatitis Heroes of Maryland Awards."

Hepatitis is a group of viral infections that damage the liver and can cause liver cancer. Hepatitis A, B, and C are the most common types of the disease. More than 4 million Americans have viral hepatitis. Nationwide, there are an estimated 85,000 new infections each year. Hepatitis A (HAV) is spread mainly through contact with contaminated food and water, Hepatitis B (HBV) is spread mainly by sexual contact, and Hepatitis C (HCV) is spread through sexual contact and injection drug use.

The Hepatitis Heroes of Maryland Awards was held at Baltimore's Healthcare for the Homeless facility. The honored include:

- Appolonius Bama, LPN, Total Health Care, Men's Health Center
- Frank Parish, RN, CIC, Baltimore City Detention Center
- Kathleen L. Becker, DNP, CRNP, Healthcare for the Homeless/Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing
- Dr. Jonathan B. Schreiber, Healthcare for the Homeless / Mercy Medical Center
- Delegate Shirley Nathan-Pulliam, Maryland House of Delegates

On May 12th, DHHS made history when it launched its Hepatitis action plan that outlined steps to prevent and treat viral hepatitis in Maryland and across the country. This plan represents a leap in the nation's effort to test for, treat and prevent the spread of Hepatitis. To view the DHHS Hepatitis action plan, please visit

<http://www.hhs.gov/ash/initiatives/hepatitis>.

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